SYNOPSIS

Economic Status of Select Women Vendors in Coimbatore District

Submitted by

JASPER JEMIMA. G

Reg. No. 17PHECF002

(Full time)

Ph.D. Research Scholar

Department of Economics

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women,

Coimbatore – 641043**.**

Supervisor

DR. Shirley Thomas

Professor,

Department of Economics,

Avinashilingam Institute for Home Science and Higher Education for Women,

Coimbatore – 641043**.**

INTRODUCTION

"Unorganized workers consist of those working in the unorganized sector or households, excluding regular workers with social security benefits provided by the employers and the workers in the formal sector without any employment and social security benefits provided by the employers" (NCEUS 2009). The informal sector is part of the economy that operates beyond the rules and regulations that govern the formal sector (ILO, 1972; Todaro, 2005). The size of informal sector is astonishingly significant in most developing countries; however the attention that it gets is limited. The informal sector helps in accommodating large number of unemployed labour and also provides employment to them. Further the informal sector employs a larger number of women than men throughout the developing nations (Chen et al., 2006). In India, a majority of them work as home based producers on piece rate, contract workers in manufacturing, unpaid family workers, construction workers, petty vendors/ hawkers, domestic workers, or as casual workers.

Informal sector is the backbone of an economy like India. It employs vast majority of the work force, and the formal sector depends for its services on informal sector to a very great extent. The Indian labour market is characterised by predominance of informal employment with more than 90 per cent of India's informal workforce working as self-employed and casual workers (Srija and Shirke 2014). Indrajit (2010) stated that from the period 1976 to 2006 the informal sector showed signs of positive growth and have expanded in a size that is comparable to the formal sector in India. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (2017-18), employment is overwhelmingly informal and, out of total 461 million employed persons, 415 million were involved in informal employment. Nearly 81 percentages of all employed persons in India make a living by working in the informal sector, with only 6.5 percent in the formal sector and 0.8 percent in the household sector; according to a new ILO (International Labour Organisation 2018) report.

Women enter the informal economy mainly for earning their livelihood and, not for making a career. Women labour in the unorganised sector is an important segment of the labour force. They do arduous work as wage earners, piece – rate workers, casual labour or unpaid family labour but the economic and social status of women workers remains poor. The unorganised women labourers are involved in various activities and they work hard to earn a

living. Their working condition is very deplorable. They have to shoulder many responsibilities. They have to do all the household chores, take care of elders at home, and look after the children and do all other work at home. There are no fixed hours of work, and the working atmosphere is not very healthy. Despite constitutional provisions to safe guard the interest of women labourers a large number of female labourers suffer from diverse problems and exploitation. The package of various labour laws has not benefited them in many crucial areas specially wages, health, maternity and social security. Women from the low income background in the informal sector are highly vulnerable. "The reasons for their vulnerability are irregular work, low economic status, little or no bargaining power, lack of control over earnings, need to balance paid work with care for children and house hold work, little or no access to institutional credit, training and information, and lack of assets" (Mohapatra, 2012).

Street vendors are the most visible sections of the informal economy. Street vending as a profession has been in existence in India since times immemorial. Street vendors are an integral component of urban economies around the world since ancient times. A large number of unorganized sector people obtain their means of maintenance by selling wide range of goods on the streets, and other public places. Bhowmik (2005) opines that street vendor sell many articles like food items, toys, flowers, vegetables, fruits and other products of everyday use to the general public, in a street, lane, side walk, footpath, pavement, public-park or temples at a cheaper rate.

Street vendors work in poor conditions with little access to infrastructure, are often subject to eviction and live in uncertainty. There are lots of challenges they face like poor working conditions, lack of social protection, low access to sanitation and water, exposure to extreme weather conditions, inadequate food intake and lack of rest. Critical factors like these take a toll on their health, not only leading to more expenses but loss of working days as well.

Need for the study

Street vendors are often those who are unable to get regular jobs in the remunerative formal sector on account of their low level of education and skills. They distribute large number of products at a cheap rate which we use daily. A street vendor faces many problems as they are vulnerable population and neither are they protected by Government, NGOs, labour union nor by any labour law. The street vendors are forced to pay bribe to local police and also are associated

with encroachment of public spaces, causing traffic congestion and are considered illegal. Street vendors are always ignored by the urban authorities-the municipality and the police-because more often than not vending is considered an illegal activity and hawkers are treated as criminals. This made the researcher to take up a systemic study on the living conditions of the street vendors and also to identify problems and challenges they face in their day to day activity. The findings of the study will be useful to identify the problems faced by the women street vendors, and help the government and NGOs work for the betterment of the women street vendors.

Theoretical Background

Labour is the most important factor of production and share of wages in National Income is more pronounced. The rift between employers and employees over several conditions of work with special reference to wage resulted in class conflict. Both Adamsmith and Karlmarx regarded labour as the only source of wealth. Smith pointed out the advantages of division on of labor which resulted in the creation of wealth. Education and skill provide employment opportunity for workers to earn more. Adam smith argued that investment in education would go a long way in enhancing the future earnings of the labour. Education coupled with skill brings in higher wages to labour. In the Neo-classical approach the demand for labour are described in the 'Marginal Productivity Theory' as developed by J.B.Clark (1899). Assuming that firms operate in a competitive labour market and face an inelastic and homogeneous supply of labour at the going wage rate, firms will maximise their profits if they employ labour upto the point where the wage equals the value of the marginal product. This theory provided an explanation of labour demand. It suggests that the number of workers employed by a firm and the wage they were paid depend, among other things, on the productivity of those workers. It assumes that, time, personal incomes and social resources are scarce. Therefore, every individual has to choose. He is guided in his choice by costs and benefits and adopts his behaviour to the changes in perceived costs Rather, the orthodox neo-classical view rests on the proposition that the worker is paid his worth; this is brought about by the existence of well behaved production functions and perfect labour. Given these preconditions, the equilibrium price of labour will be determined by the elasticity of substitution for capital in the production process and its relative plenitude. The

problems arising from differences in skill requirement and labour quality are resolved by investment in human capital. Government should take the initiative to increase investment in education to raise the productivity of labour and hence its price.

Theory of "Human Capital" as developed by Becker (1960) gave importance to education and skill, which are related to productivity. This theory demonstrates the fact that direct and positive relationship between improvements in the levels of education and productivity increase of the labour force is marked. There is no denying of the fact that most of the people who are working in informal sector are illiterates. It is lack of education and skill which forced many of them to take up any kind of jobs in this sector and they get very less income compared to those in the formal sector. If they are given proper education this people also would be better placed and that helps them to earn better. Imparting skill also augment their productivity and they will be become better workers. It is at this juncture education is given importance and government is keen on giving universal education which will contribute to the overall development of a person. Since these women lack education and skill, they need to be empowered. Therefore investment in education is essential. The current study draws women who do not posses very high education and skill but with the basic education they carry on their work.

Research Gap

Earlier studies probed into various aspects with respect to the life of street vendors who are part of the informal sector. Sethuraman (1977) Ghose (1983) Tripathy (1996) Eapen (2000) highlighted the working conditions of people in Informal sector, women conditions of people in Informal sector. Women constitute a prominent group who works in informal sector. While cohen (1984) Monique et.al (2002) Shaw (2005), Gupta et.al (2011) Jaishaker (2016), Chakraborty and Koley (2018) and many others attempted to identify the need for women to enter into informal activities, Saran and Sadhwar (1990), Anjaria (2006), Geetha (2010), Walsh (2010) and others probed into on the problems faced by street vendors many researchers like Gallart (2002), Liimatainen (2002), Silveria and Matosas (2003), Murray (2006), Haan (2007).

While earlier theories concentrated on street vendors in general i.e. both male and female vendors, this particular study wanted to make an intense probe into the general living conditions and problems faced by women street vendors only. Also while

many studies attempted on product wise vendors the current study is different as it takes into account women vendors who deal in various products like fruit, vegetables, flowers, food and non- perishable items.

Objective of the study

- To understand the Socio-Economic conditions of select women street vendors in Coimbatore district and to identify the factors determining income of women vendors.
- To study the working conditions of the selected sample and to identify the factors which discriminate the vendors into mobile and stationary vendors.
- To assess the health status of women vendors and to identify the factors determining health problems, health expenditure or cost of treatment.
- To study the business satisfication of women vendors and constraints faced by the women in their business

Review of Literature

- Tripathy (1996), Bromely (2000), Eapen (2000), Drajit (2009) etc., analyzed the economic importance of informal sector and revealed that women street vendors are over burdened with their work and many are exploited.
- Breman (1985), Ayikai (2013), Banerjee (2014) etc**.,** discussed on the various health issues of women street vendors and pointed out that lack of basic civic amenities and poor food intake and continuous work both at home and work place make them sick and they suffer from several health issues.
- While Saradamoni (1995), Devasthali (1998), Karthikeyan (2013), Kumar and Verrakumr (2019) identified various problems faced by women street vendors. Ready et.al (2001), Bhowmik (2003), Rani and Monisha (2016), focused on the need to have labor legislation to protect them.
- Chatterjee and Chakraborty (2004) suggested the civil authority to provide and promote a supporting environment for earning livelihoods to the street hawkers that if hawking is properly regulated and the awareness to environment is created it can be a positive contribution to city life.

Hypotheses

- There is relationship between income and socio economic variables.

- There is a relationship between street vendor's health problems and dietary pattern.
- There is association between level of education and health status of the selected women street vendors.
- There is association between taking medicines and earnings received.
- Constraints are not associated with socio – economic problems.

Methodology

The city of Coimbatore is a growing business hub with lots of commercial complexes, housing units, schools, colleges, hospitals, Malls, Corporate and IT companies. Recent years witnessed growth of street vendors and women formed a majority among them. Vendors operate mainly near the temples, market places, educational institutions and near bus stands. Vendors sell many articles which are used by the individuals at a cheaper rate. For administrative purpose the Coimbatore Corporation is divided into five zones namely North, South, East, West and Central zone. From each zone one urban area which is thickly populated, and which has maximum number of women street vendors, who supply the essential articles to consumers were chosen for the research work. Based on this the five urban areas selected for the study in each zone are Kantanpalayam, Perur, Puliyakulam Thoundamuthur, and Gandhipuram respectively , which are prominent areas with lots of schools, shops, temples and therefore these areas has large footfall every day. The vendors were selected based on the products which they sold as these are essentials for everyday life. The product were fruits, vegetable, flowers, cooked food, and non - perishable items like hand bags, chapels, toys, plastic materials, artificial jewellery and many such items which are in great demand by the common man. The current study selected 445 women street vendors, who does business in these areas in the above mentioned items. The selected women street vendors consist of fruit vendors (91 numbers), vegetable vendors (85), flower vendors (94), food vendors (95), non – perishable items vendors (80) making the sample size to level of 445. With the help of an interview schedule, details regarding socio-economic conditions and other facts were collected.

Finding of the study

- **Socio – Economic Profile of the Respondents**
    - Among the total respondents studied, more than half of the respondents were above the age of 41 years, majority of them (71.2 percentage) were married, and the need for supporting the family have made them take up this activity.
    - The respondents belonged to different religion namely Hindus (80 percentage), Mulims (9.2 percentage) Christians (10.3 percentage).
    - Caste system is predominant in India. The survey pointed out that 42 percentage belonged to Scheduled Caste/ Scheduled Tribes.
    - The need to educate themselves were well realised by the women and this may be reason that a good number of them are educated. Only 10.3 percent of the vendors were illiterate, but this did not prevent them from carrying on their business.
    - A whopping proportion (71.2 percentage) of the sample were married. Around 16 percent were widows and the rest were either separated or divorced.
    - The sizes of the family with four members were to a level of 40 percent while there were 15 percent of the sample who had more than four members in the family.
    - Joint family system is still followed by seven percent while 81 percentages live as a nuclear family.
    - The Income earned by respondents were classified into four. Around 42 percent earned an income between Rs. 10,000 – 20,000 and only 3 percent earned above Rs. 20,000 per month. In these days of spiralling cost of living this income is highly insufficient.
    - It was inferred that the average income of the working women was significantly associated with age, religion, caste, educational qualification, marital status, size of the family and type of family.
    - Discriminant analysis was used to distinguish women vendors into mobile and stationary vendors.

- Among the vendors a total of 272 women had their own houses while the rest were living in rented house.
- Nearly 91 percentage of food vendors had their own vehicles followed by 88 percentages of vegetable vendors and 81 percentage vendors who sold non – perishable items.
- More than half of the respondents, that is, 41.1 percent of them were living in tiled house and all the respondents had cement flooring and all houses had electricity connection.
- Savings is a virtue and 61.5 percent of the street vendors had the habit of saving and most of them saved less than Rs. 1500 per month.
- The study pointed out that 53 percent of women made a repayment of Rs.1000 – 5000/- and 39 percentage repaid an amount to a level of Rs. 5000- Rs. 10,000/-.
- The logistic regression analysis was used to identify the determinants of income of women vendors. It revealed that age had exhibited significant relationship with income.

- **Employment pattern and working condition of the selected women vendors**

  - The vegetable vendors and flower vendors who had five to ten years of experiences were around 52 percentages. Around 48 percentages of fruit vendors had more than 10 years of experience while the percentage of the overall sample revealed that 35 percentages had five to 10 years of experience. Only around six percent of the entire sample size had experience of less than one year.
  - Around 154 (34.6 percent) women vendors sought financial help from friends while from the relatives it was to the tune of 105 (23.5 percent).
  - At times certain products had to be thrown off while the entire goods are not sold. This was common among fruits and flower vendors. The study pointed out that around 257 (58 percent) women sold their goods at lower price.
  - Around 19.5 percent of the respondents worked for 21 to 25 days and 10.8 respondents worked for less than 20 days in a month.
  - Majority (43.4 percent) of the respondents earned above Rs. 400/-as their daily income.
  - Among the women vendors, 97 percentages of fruit vendors worked for less than eight hours and this was followed by flower vendors (84 percentages). Around 18 women food vendors were working for more than 16 hours and 47 women food vendors worked for 8 – 16 hours per day.
  - Age, size of the family, type of family, education qualification, monthly income, years of experience, working hours, investment, and distance of vending place from home, are important determinants in discriminating vendors into mobile and stationary vendors.
  - The study found that many of the vendors did not have proper drinking water. Vendors of fruits, vegetables, flowers, and food expressed that there is poor toilet facility in the work spot. More than 20 women vendors among the above stated group strongly disagreed on the toilet facility that is available.
  - Around 42 food vendors strongly agreed that they spoiled the area by throwing all the materials used for packing foods while 13 of them strongly disagreed.

- **Health status of the vendors**

  - An analysis of the health profile of the vendors pointed out that 64 (14.3 percent) had leg pain and hand pain. There were 48 women who had joint pains.
  - There were other ailment like common fever, diarrhoea, hand pain, back pain and such issues which affect the women vendors. Constant and continuous work coupled with poor nutrition, lack of rest, exposure to all types of weather conditions makes them fall sick, but not all resort to medical help. While some of them take treatment at Government hospitals a few avail private health service while there are a few who still choose

domestic medicine or treatment. The spiralling cost of treatment, fear of revealing the sickness and absence of substitute to carry on the daily chores both at home and vending place are the major reasons for not going to hospital or any health care centres.

- The independent variables like age, income, working hours, sanitation, expenditure on health and food intake play an important role in determining the health status of women workers.
- The results revealed that health status of women street vendors are independent of selected socio – economic factors and dietary pattern.
- There is association between level of education and health status of the selected women street vendors.
- Pearson chi-square value of the above table is 240.180 at 1% level of significance. P value is less than 0.000, hence null hypothesis is rejected. This indicates that there exists an association between level of education and health issues.
- The logistic regression analysis was used to identify the determinants of health expenses of women vendors. Among the selected factors, income and food habits were statistically significant to determine the health expenses of women vendors.

Place of checkup

- The study shows that 259 (58.2 percentage) vendors out of 445 chose medical treatment from Government Hospital, while 150 respondents (33.7 percent) went to private hospital for medical aid and 20 respondents (4.5 percent) chose trust hospital and 16 respondents (3.6 percent) sought treatment from other clinics and self – medication.

Cost of treatment

- Nearly 54 respondents spent Rs. 800 - 1000/- year and 24 respondents spent Rs.1500 – 3000 per year towards treatment. Only nine percentage reported spending above Rs.5000/-. And there were five flower vendors and four food vendors who were spending this amount.

- The study found out that there exists an association between not taking medicines and income received by the women street vendors. The poor earnings and high medical expenses prevent many women vendors from taking medicines or go for treatment in case of any health issues. Chi-square test was used and it revealed the association between not taking medicines and income received by the women street vendors.

- **Job Satisfaction Level of the Respondents**
  - Five point rating scale was used to measure the satisfaction level of women street vendors in the selected areas.
  - The job satisfaction is classified as highly satisfied, Satisfied, Neutral, Dis-satisfied, and Highly dis – satisfied and from each group of women we received their response. Among the fruit vendors and food vendors nearly one third were dissatisfied with their profession while the number was only 12.7 percent among flower vendors. Around 19 percentage of the vendors said they were satisfied with their job. Though this work or vending activity may not fetch very high profit these women are quite satisfied. This type of satisfaction is of great prominence in the overall quality of life of women.
  - Among the fruit vendors and food vendors nearly one third were dissatisfied with their profession while the number was only 12.7 percent among flower vendors.
  - The major constraints they faced were paucity of fund threat from police and municipal authorities, lack of proper infrastructure in the working place and uncertainty of business.

- **Government scheme for street vendors**

- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has informed that, on 15.03.2021, 23.24 lakh loans have been sanctioned and 18.54 lakh loans have been disbursed to the beneficiaries under the Pradhan Mantri Street Vendors, Atma Nirbhar Nidhi Scheme (PM SVANidhi). PM SVANidhi scheme was launched on June 1, 2020, distribute loans to nearly 300,000 street vendors under the Pradhan Mantri Street Vendor's Atmanirbhar Nidhi Yojana or PM SVANidhi Scheme.
- Provision of kit from the ration shops benefited all the street vendors to carry forward their day to day affairs.

Conclusion

Street vendors form and important segment of the society in the urban area and they provide many essentials to the households at cheap rate. However, the operators are considered as unlawful entities and are subject to continuous harassment by civic authorities. The study claimed that women involved in street vending face several problems in the courses of running their activities. The lack of amenities at the work place or on streets coupled with poor food intake and exposure to extreme climate and arduous work make them tired and also fall prey to some health issues. Every business day poses a challenge to their survival because they do not have legal recognition.

Suggestions

Vending zones with all required facilities should be created so as to reduce their work related problems. Street vendors should be issued ID cards and licenses for street vending. Being a member of any Self Help Group will help the women to be financially independent either to start the business or to expand the same. So awareness among the women street vendors to be part of a women's organization or an SHG's would be commendable. The welfare schemes of the government for the street vendors should be promoted and women should be aware of their rights.

Recommendations

- There should be cooperation between municipalities and police with respect to giving legal status to the street vendors.
- Vendors need to be protected by government, NGO's, labour union by any labour laws.
- Banks or other financial institutions should provide loans to the street vendors.
- Harassment from local authorities or from policemen during vending should be stopped.
- Municipalities should update national policies for the management of vendors which will be helpful to tackle the social and economic problems associated with vendors.
- Health promotion campaigns must be arranged among street vendors; to raise awareness of work related issues.
- Adequate facilities should be provided to the women street vendors.
- Education and training programmes for vendors need to be given so as to help them improve their condition.

Area for further Research

- Municipal programmes for urban street vendors in Coimbatore District can be studied.
- Study on street vendors on consumer point of view can be done.
- A comparative study on male and female street vendors can be done.
- Study on rural street vendors can be carried out.

Bibliography

1. **Berman (1985)** "Acquisition of Hebrew," Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
2. **Banerjee, S. (2014)** "A study of Socio-Economic Conditions of Vegetable Street Vendors in Ranchi", Jharkhand Journal of Social Development, ISSN 0974-65IX, Vol-VII, No.1 & 2, pp 1-9.
3. **Clark John Bates (1899)** "The Distribution of Wealth: A Theory of Wages, Interest and Profits," (ed.) The Macmillan Company, New York.
4. **Chatterjee Debdulal and Chakraborty Kumar Dilip (2004)** cited in Dendukuri Indira (2014) "A study on the Organizing of Street Hawking Business" International Journal of Management and Commerce Innovations, vol 2, no 1, Pp 28 -288.
5. **Chen, M., J. Vanek, and J. Heintz. (2006)** "Informality, Gender and Poverty: A Global Picture." Economic and Political Weekly. 27 May. Pages 2131–9.
6. **Eapen (2000)** "Women in Informal Sector in Kerala, Need for Re –examination," Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. XXXVI, No 26, Pp 497 – 523.
7. **Indrajit Bairagya (2010)** "Liberalization, Informal Sector and Formal – Informal Sectors Relationship: A study of India," The International Association for Research in Income and Wealth, Pp 39.
8. **Mohapatra (2012)** "Women Workers in Informal Sector in India: Understanding the Occupational Vulnerability". International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, Vol. 2 No. 21.
9. **Saradamoni, (1995)** "Crisis in fishing industry and women's migration: the case of Kerala", p.104-145. In L. Shenk Sandbergen (ed.) Women and seasonal labour migration in rural India. Indo-Dutch Studies on Development Alternatives No. 16. Sage Publications, New Delhi, India.
10. **Srija and Shirke, (2014)** "An Analysis of the Informal Labour Market in India," Working Papers id: 6353, Social Sciences, Pp 40-46.
11. **Tripathy S.N. (1996)** "Women Labour in Construction Sector, A Study in Orissa" in S.N Tripathy (Ed), Unorganized Women Labour in India, New Delhi, Discovery publishing house, pp: 92-98. 5.
12. **Todaro, (2005)** "Development Economics", 5th ed., McGraw-Hill, Boston, MA.

Report

1. **National Commission for Enterprises in The Unorganized Sector (2009) "The challenge of employment in India an Informal Economy Perspective"**, Vol – 1 Main Report, Pp 422.
2. **ILO (International Labor Organization) (1972)** "Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for Increasing Productive Employment in Kenya," Geneva.

Website

1. https://www.ilo.org/legacy/english/protection/travail/pdf/rdwpaper27b.pdf
2. https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1696278
3. http://ugspace.ug.edu.gh/bitstream/handle/123456789/5867/Owusu%20Monica%20Ayikai_Self-Reported%20Health%20Status%20Among%20Street%20Vendors%20in%20Accra_2013.pdf?sequence=1